



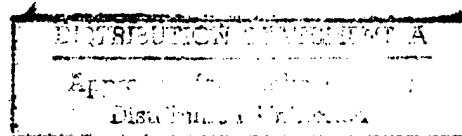
**THE MEDIA AND THE MILITARY:  
AN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL EXAMINATION**

GRADUATE RESEARCH PAPER

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AFIT/GMO/LAL/98J-7



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*If I take the wings  
of the morning,  
and dwell in the  
uttermost parts  
of the sea;  
Even there  
shall Thy hand lead me,  
and Thy  
right hand  
shall hold me*  
Psalm 139:9,10

Gregory M. Hannon

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## **Abstract**

Historically, two of the institutions that have been traditionally linked to the defense of the Constitution have found themselves increasingly at odds with one another. There is, and has been for years, a genuine problem in basic military-media relations. This paper examines this relationship in a historical sense, from the Revolutionary to present day operations. It attempts to focus on the evolution of the military- media relationship and how and why it is what it remains today. Specifically, the military's handling of the press during the Gulf War is examined in greater detail to explore each institution's approach to the media relations.

The inherent cultures of the two institutions are markedly different. This has resulted in an inherent culture clash between the media and the military, and this paper explores the roots of this conflict. By gaining a greater understanding of this culture clash, it is hoped that each side can better understand the other's position regarding the need for military security, and the press' obligation to report the news.

This paper concludes by recognizing the fact that the military and the media must establish as fact that they really need each other. Non-cooperation by the press can impair military options. Conversely, the American public has a right to know what the military is doing.



# **THE MEDIA AND THE MILITARY:**

## **AN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL EXAMINATION**

### **I. Introduction**

*"It is true that at the end of the twentieth century the role of the media in military affairs cannot be treated any longer as a side issue, except by willful ignorance, and that in many cases involving Western forces the behavior of the media can help determine success or failure."*

- Stephan Badsey  
British Military Analyst

### **Background**

Few would argue that the power of the media to influence US policy and sway public opinion is enormous. The irony lies in that the two national institutions that have traditionally been tasked with the defense of our Constitution, the media and the military, have in recent years become increasingly at odds with each other. This paper explores several areas regarding the historical relationship between the media and the military and how that relationship has changed over time. The media issues encountered during Operation DESERT STORM are examined in greater detail. Specific examples of recent contingencies are explored, and the question of the actions of the press as a motivation to U.S. involvement is raised. Finally, the culture of the press, to include their beliefs, backgrounds, and motivations as a block are explored.

Most certainly, the historical relationship between the media and the military should be examined. A look at history is almost always instructive in trying to solve

problems. Take the recent conduct of operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. Most Americans appeared highly pleased with how the war was conducted and how this nation's military performed. The one glaring exception was the news media. The news media complained early on to the military about how they were being handled and how information was given to them. A basic and inherent problem has been exposed, namely, the collision of two opposing philosophies. After the 1983 Grenada operation URGENT FURY, Otis Pike said, "Our military is trained to win. Winning requires secrecy and an image of skill, courage, stamina, strength, and sacrifice. Our media are trained to report. Reporting must avoid secrecy and must also report blunders, cowardice, exhaustion, weakness, and agony, all of which demoralize us" (Sidle, 1991:53). The Constitution calls for the defense of our nation while at the same time endorsing the first amendment, however, both sides appear to have a divergent view of the meaning of the word "free." While the military views some freedoms as less than absolute, the press views its role quite differently. What this amounts to is that the media agree they should protect military security and troop safety, but they should be the party to set the restriction, not the military. By all published accounts, the US military has handled the press differently throughout history.

## **Research Questions**

To properly understand the relationship between the press and the military, the following research questions will be asked:

1. What has been the history of relations of the media and the military, from the Revolutionary War to Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama?

2. How did this relationship change during the Gulf War and is the media prompting military involvement during the most recent military operations?
3. Is there an inherent clash of cultures concerning the military and the press, and if so, what are some of the specifics to help explain this chasm?

## **II. History of Media Relations**

### **Revolutionary War**

During the Revolutionary War, the relationship between the military and the media was not cause for much concern. First of all, most members of the media in-place at the time fully supported the conflict. They themselves were revolutionaries. This, in some cases, may have lead to self censorship. Secondly, in the latter half of 18th century America, there were relatively few reporters, newspapers, and readers. Finally, news did not travel rapidly. If the "self censorship" policy did not achieve success, states like Massachusetts had censorship laws on the books to rectify the situation (Sidle, 1991:55).

It did not take long before the fledgling nation's highest ranking military commander, General George Washington, ran into opposition from the press corps. Only two years after shots were fired in anger at Lexington and Concord, press reports were showing up in newspapers that General Washington believed undermined the war effort. He wrote this angry retort to a New York newspaper: "It is much to be wished that our printers were more discreet in many of their publications. We see in almost every paper proclamations or accounts transmitted by the enemy of an injurious nature" (Matthews, 1991:ix).

### **The Civil War**

During the Civil War, military relations with the media became increasingly strained. Both sides employed censorship, and some Union generals barred reporters

from their camps. General Grant was known to detest reporters; sometimes cursing openly to aides that they were no better than Confederate spies. One Union General, however, held particular contempt for the press corps. In 1864, General William Tecumseh Sherman heard a rumor that three reporters with the Union Army of the Tennessee had been captured by the Confederates and executed. He rejoined: "Good! Now we'll have news from hell before breakfast" (Matthews, 1991:x).

The conflict between the media and the military was exacerbated during the Civil War. Quite simply, it was the military's requirement for secrecy and the press' hunger for news that helped to drive the wedge between them. Early attempts by the Union army to strong-arm the press into silence were both ineffective and harmful. During Sherman's epic march across Georgia, a Union staff officer ordered the press to leave the ranks and travel back to Washington. There, he told them, they would get the news from the front after it was filtered down through official channels! The incredulous reporters replied back that the country was eager for information regarding the war. The staff officer replied, "What the hell do we care about the country" (Matthews, 1991:xi). Any military staff officer who attempted such a ham-fisted approach to the press would undoubtedly be in great peril.

## **Post Civil War through World War II**

Censorship was the norm, from the Spanish American War through WW II. According to a veteran public affairs officer, Major Gen Sidle, USA (ret), censorship was not imposed effectively in some instances and disregarded in others (Sidle, 1991:55). There were relatively few complaints from the media. On the surface, all appeared well and the patriotism of the press corps was mostly high. There were signs, however, that

resentment and suspicion on both sides were growing. For example, the commander of the American expeditionary force into Cuba during the Spanish American War found himself unprepared to deal with the press accompanying him. General Shafter summarized the military's attitude towards the press when he remarked: "I don't give a damn who you are. I'll treat you all alike" (Matthews, 1991:6). This time the press struck back, vilifying the General and printing facts about the military's unprepared state in the press. The military avoided a public relations disaster only because of the sheer weight of overwhelming public support for the war.

Reporting during World War I was largely a simple regurgitation of each host nation's wartime propaganda. Still, suspicion of the press among the military was fueled by the occasional critical story. In response, the U.S. Army launched its own newspaper, the *Stars and Stripes*. While boosting Army morale, the newspaper crept into hibernation until it was resurrected on April 12, 1942. In fact, only seventy-one issues were published from February 8, 1918 to June 13, 1919. Since its re-activation during WWII, the *Stars and Stripes* operates until this day. Some of the information published in the paper was official, some of it was not. The paper had no wire service, so it relied heavily on its internal staff (Zumwalt, 1989:x). Other reporters out in the field had their access tightly controlled. Beginning in WW I, reporters traveled with units in uniform, and wore rank. The division between the press and military was less defined as it exists today. Given this direct control over the press, the military exercised it with a heavy hand. Matthews addressed this when he wrote,

The Army's policies for handling war correspondents were cautious in the extreme. American newsmen who wished to report the war had to be accredited by a lengthy process that included a personal appearance before the Secretary of War, an oath to write the truth, and submission of a

\$10,000 bond to insure their proper conduct in the field. In France, they submitted their writing to military censors who operated under the intelligence directorate (G-2), the arm of the Army most certain to protect even the least significant military secrets. (Matthews, 1991:7)

The military learned from the mistakes of the past and began to treat the press with an increasing degree of sophistication. The military leadership began to understand that neither the soldier nor the public at large would support the war effort unless they possessed a keen appreciation of the war and what was happening (Matthews, 1991:9). Most scholars and historians agree that the Army did a masterful job of handling the press during the WW II. The overall climate and level of patriotism, however, appeared higher during WW II as opposed to a regional war like Vietnam. This most certainly affected the relationship between the media and the military during WW II. General Sidle recognized this when he wrote,

US leaders learned from the World War I experience and imposed total censorship quite successfully during World War II. We had voluntary censorship at home and mandatory censorship in the combat zones. This censorship, which was sometimes especially stringent in certain areas, did not bring a rash of complaints from reporters, probably because of patriotism and the almost complete freedom of movement and access to commanders. (Sidle, 1991:56)

Overall, it appears that during WW II, both the government and the news media alike accurately and honestly reported on most battles and campaigns. Besides re-establishing the *Stars and Stripes*, the military launched other efforts in an attempt to control the press and win the public relations battle. A magazine title *Yank* appeared on the scene shortly after *Stars and Stripes* was published. The Army's Information and Education Division built and operated radio stations. These provided both news and entertainment to the troops in the field (Matthews, 1991:9). Moreover, the military seemed to recognize the fact that the ability to broadcast news electronically and

instantaneously was tremendously important. Instead to attempting to stifle bad news, the services (especially the Army) succeeded in releasing enough information to keep the press reasonably satisfied (Matthews, 1991:10).

## **Korea**

Relations between the media and the military were so congenial at the end of WW II that commanders erroneously expected the same treatment at the outset of the Korean conflict. Since they did not have as much direct control over the war correspondents in Korea as they had in WW II, the military lacked the ability to dictate censorship policy on the press corps. Instead, military commanders imposed a system of voluntary guidelines that they expected reporters would follow. Initially, the media complied with the military's requests. The voluntary policy worked so well that the United Nations Commander in Korea, General MacArthur, lauded the press. While free of the censorship policies of the past, he said that the press had so far provided the American public complete coverage of the war, "without, as far as I know, a single security breach of a nature to provide effective assistance to the enemy" (Matthews, 1991:12).

The guidelines and subjects of censorship were generally the same subjects that were censored during WW II. These included troop strength, locations of units, logistics information, and troop movements. Initially, the process appeared to benefit from the WW II experience. "Although there were some complaints from the media, it seemed to work satisfactorily. As the conflict drew to a close, the censorship seemed both competent and effective...accepted by both the media and the military as the solution to their basic conflict" (Sidle, 1991:56).



This spirit of cooperation evaporated when China entered the war. Havoc, confusion, and panic invaded the Korean Theater. As a result, reporters became much more aggressive in an attempt to specify what had happened, and what was going to happen next. MacArthur's public affairs officers (PAO's) did not perform well under this pressure. The job of any PAO is to become knowledgeable, pass along information to the press, and meet any other media requirements such as transportation, meals, and billeting. Their role has not changed to this day. Hampered by fierce competition among reporters, MacArthur's PAOs failed to clearly specify what news was of value to the enemy. The system quickly broke down. MacArthur reacted by invoking censorship, however, and military public affairs officers quickly began to overstep their bounds. They extended censorship into almost every area, even those topics that were reasonable subjects for dissemination and distribution. Matthews wrote that military information officers took the occasion to directly provoke the media.

When inmates rioted at a United Nations prisoner of war facility in April 1952, for example, the information officers withheld all word of the event lest it become an issue in armistice negotiations. They also delayed before releasing information on the seizure of the American commander of the Kojo-do POW camp by enemy inmates during May 1952. In both cases, word surfaced in the form of newspaper exposes that did more damage to the Army than to the negotiations. (Matthews, 1991:12)

Breaches of security by the press became an increasingly grave problem to the military. MacArthur's crackdown on the press was sometimes a dismal failure. Some reporters chose to circumvent the military altogether and traveled to Japan. From that island, they were free to report whatever, and whenever they chose. "As a result, on 18 June 1951, *Newsweek* published a map detailing the order of battle for the entire U.S. 8<sup>th</sup> Army" (Matthews, 1991:12).

Whether the military overreacted or used the censorship policy as a tool of revenge against the press is subject to speculation. The seeds of future conflict between the two institutions, however, were already sown.

## **The Cold War**

While the time period of the Cold War is quite broad and the conflict in many ways more complex than a conventional war, it is worth mentioning here for the sake of its historical importance and its influence on the media. The most noteworthy concern of the press about the military was the threat of nuclear war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. At no time during the Cold War did this possibility seem more real than during the Cuban Missile crisis. Before this crisis, the press (with a few exceptions) generally seemed to acknowledge that the threat of nuclear war was a necessary evil in order to contain communism. This changed when the press was forced to contemplate the reality of a nuclear exchange. Ben H. Bagdikian wrote in the *Columbian Journalism Review* "The central dilemma for a free society is that in a world of missiles and nuclear bombs, technology demands that we grant our President godlike powers of decision; yet history has convinced us that politically it is unsafe to let any mortal play God" (Aronson, 1970:175). Further, relations between the Pentagon and the press became strained when news outlets learned they were lied to about U.S. knowledge of the missiles in the first place. Many reporters felt betrayed. They thought they had been used throughout the crisis as an unwilling arm of U.S. foreign policy. The government's selective release of information was meant to steer the Soviets in a particular U.S. desired position, and the press was not pleased.

Interestingly, one of the most interesting comments of the media about the Cold War has come about recently. There are some in the media who believe that the Cold War was fought in vain, and that the Soviets were not a legitimate threat. The well respected television anchor Walter Cronkite said,

I thought that we Americans overreacted to the Soviets and the news coverage sometimes seemed to accentuate that misdirected concern. Fear of the Soviet Union taking over the world just seemed as likely to me as invaders from Mars...That war-devastated country didn't seem that threatening to me...The nuclear arms race was on in earnest. All the anti-Soviet paranoia that had been festering since the war blew up then. A Soviet bomb was seen as an assault on us. But I saw it as part of their pursuit of nuclear equality. (Cronkite, 1997)

## **Vietnam**

Vietnam marked a further departure from tradition regarding the policy of censorship of the press by the military. This departure seems to be driven, in part, by the rapid rise of global communications technology. With the ability to transmit new stories into the living rooms of every American via television, the press appeared less likely to adhere to the military's strict censorship guidelines. General Sidle wrote,

But then, something happened. The media grew vastly in size, television matured into a real media force, advances in communications technology greatly enhanced news-gathering activities and the government became reluctant to use censorship. Perhaps the biggest change came with the Vietnam War, which caused a significant attitude alteration between the media and the military. (Sidle, 1991:56)

As was the case in Korea, the press initially complied with the military's voluntary set of guidelines concerning censorship. Most of the media (for the most part) supported the war, with the exception of newspapers like the *New York Times* who were extremely critical of military policy. General William C. Westmoreland, U.S. commander in Vietnam, supported the voluntary censorship policy because he trusted the good will of

the American correspondents reporting the war. For his part, Westmoreland initiated a program to keep the press informed by providing regular background briefings, a 24-hour public affairs staff, daily press conferences, and transportation into the field for reporters (Matthews, 1991:12). Initially, this public relations strategy for the military worked well. It promoted an atmosphere of cooperation with the press. However, as the war dragged on and more U.S. forces were moved into the area, the press support of the military began to be tested. President Johnson made the decision to not attack North Vietnam sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia or to block enemy ports. Whole areas of North Vietnam were ruled "Off Limits" to U.S. aviators. Because the war was dragging on, President Johnson decided that he needed to mount a public relations campaign to accomplish two objectives: shore up public support at home and convince the enemy that there was no hope for their cause. He launched his media blitz by employing every agency in the government and the military he could muster to bring forth the message. This message was that the South Vietnamese armed forces were an effective fighting unit, that the programs launched by the U.S. were improving life for the peasants, and that the U.S. military effort was making progress (Matthews, 1991:13). Initially, the news media dutifully repeated these themes, however, as the reality around them began to hammer away with the message that they were untrue, pessimism and cynicism began to flourish. The press found themselves again feeling that they had been lied to by the military. John Hohnenberg wrote:

The bitterness of the critics was a symptom of the abnormal tensions in Washington. The correspondents blamed many things – the formidable pressures of the Presidency, the "carrot and stick" treatment of the press, abrasive personal relationships between a wide assortment of government officials and leaders of the news media, the constant efforts to channel the news and the many miscalculations in Vietnam. (Hohnenberg, 1968:127)

This dilemma became to be referred to as the “credibility gap.” The media were caught between supporting the President’s policies and their own naked judgment that the situation was not going well and the military was inappropriately infusing itself into politics. When the press attempted to separate the two and rely on civilian agencies for the political spin on issues, the Joint Chiefs of Staff overruled them on the grounds that military matters spilled over to the political realm. Quickly, the daily press conferences became to be known as “The Five O’Clock Follies” (Matthews, 1991:13).

The coverage became increasingly negative as the war progressed, and reached a crescendo during the Tet Offensive of 1968. This was undoubtedly one of the reasons for the loss of favorable public support during the latter stages of the war. General Sidle writes:

As the war progressed, unfavorable stories about the military in Vietnam also grew, resulting in increased distrust, even dislike, of the press by the military—even though some of the stories were true or partially true. The coverage of the Tet offensive was especially misleading and negative; many claim it was the turning point of public support for the war. (Sidle, 1991:57)

After the Paris Peace Accords and the end of the war, it became clear to both parties that relationship between the media and the military had reached an all time low.

## **Grenada**

It is General Sidle’s opinion that in the years after Vietnam and before Grenada, the military establishment had categorized media coverage of the military as antagonistic and negative. Trust between the two parties continued to erode (Sidle, 1991:59). During Operation URGENT FURY, the media were not permitted on the island of Grenada for the first two days of the conflict. The DoD developed what was called the “pool system.”

This would consist of a small number of reporters selected at random from different media outlets. This was the only group designated by the DoD to be permitted access to the operation, and they would in-turn share their information with other members of the press. Members of the pool would be briefed and provided with escorts, transportation, meals, billeting, and a means to file their stories. There were several problems with this system. First, no initial plans had been made to include the media in Operation URGENT FURY. They were, in short, an afterthought.

Although never admitted, the military's distrust of the media at the time of the Grenada operation in 1983 had to be a part of the reason the media were not permitted on Grenada for the first two days, and only a pool was allowed on the third day. (Sidle, 1991:59)

The first group of 15 journalists landed on the island on 27 October 1983, two full days after the initial invasion (Matthews, 1991:81). This single pool group allowed in did nothing to pacify the 400 non-pool journalists that had rented hotel rooms at the nearby island of Barbados. They unilaterally blamed the U.S. military for failing to allow them to cover the operation. Despite the anger of the press, the public appeared to support the operation.

It is interesting to note that, according to the opinion polls conducted at the time, the public overwhelmingly agreed with the exclusion of the press. Apparently, part of the reason was that the public agreed that the press had been too negative in the past. (Sidle, 1991:59)

## **Panama**

In the wake of Grenada, the DoD instituted the National Media Pool (NMP) in 1984.

Testifying before the Senate Committee on Government Affairs, General Sidle said:

Immediately after the Grenada Operation in 1983, at General Vessey's request I headed a panel of newsmen and public affairs officers that met in 1984 to make recommendations as to how the military should handle the

media in future military operations. Our recommendations were approved by both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the secretary of defense. One of our recommendations was the use of press pools in cases where the military situation precluded full media participation. (Smith, 1992:105)

The press pool was first activated during Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama. Most reports indicate that it did not work well. The pool arrived late and other reporters were already on scene, thus robbing pool members credit of being the first media at the scene. In effect, members of the press who played by the "rules" were penalized, because they were scooped by other journalists who got there first. Moreover, the situation was by some accounts, even worse. Richard Pyle wrote:

The pools' first major combat test had come during the "Persian Gulf Tanker War" in 1987-88. There it was moderately successful. But in Panama, a year later, it was a fiasco. The pools were flown in hours after the invasion began, but instead of being placed with units in the field, the journalists were confined to a headquarters building where they, like everybody else, were forced to rely on independent television reporters to find out what was going on. (Smith, 1992:112)

It is important to highlight this point now, namely, that getting their story out is of the utmost importance to the journalist. Getting the story first and exclusively is the goal. This point cannot be overstated enough, because it is instructive for the military to understand. A reporter may take pride in the fact that he is working for a major news outlet like *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. Where that reporter takes further pride in, however, is getting the story out first. Receiving credit is extremely important to the journalist. The practice of placing the author's name, or byline, over an article is critical to this end.

Giving credit is so much the rule today that bylines are considered a reporter's right, even for minor stories. If a small community's newspaper has only a handful of reporters, it is not unusual to see the same byline

over three or four stories, sometime on the same page. (Hamilton and Krimsky, 1996:129)

Once again, the stage had been set for media resentment of the military. By denying reporters access to a combat zone, the military had prevented giving many reporters the opportunity to advance their careers. The pool system, while officially agreed to by both parties, had not worked well. In Panama, the overall impression from the press was that the military had led them to the well, and that well was dry.



### III. The Gulf War and Recent Operations

*"Listen, I ain't no dummy when it comes to dealing with the press. And I fully understand that when you try to stonewall the press, and don't give them anything to do, then before long the press turns ugly, and I would just as soon not have an ugly press. I don't care if they report the truth, I just want them to be correct. Not everything is going to be right. Every time there is something new for the press to look at, I want them to see it, I want them to be out there. I want to create opportunities for them so they are kept informed."*

- General Norman Schwarzkopf  
Gulf War Commander  
(Smith, 1992:112)

#### The Gulf War

Any valid examination of the current relationship between the media and the military must include America's most recent major conflict – the Gulf War. In some ways, the problems that have been discussed so far arose as well. However, many analysts have concluded that the military dealt with the press much better than it had in earlier conflicts. This is not to say that the military does not have its critics with regard to this subject, however, a close examination reveals a break with the past.

On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded and conquered the tiny nation of Kuwait. The quick U.S. response into the Gulf region, the subsequent build up of forces, and the ensuing war energized the media and placed them into a crisis-like mode for the next seven months. Media coverage mounted to the point that by early January 1991, 1,400 journalists were in the Gulf area. "If Vietnam was the first television war, Operation

DESERT STORM was the first brought home by satellite, sometimes live and in living color” (Greenberg and Gantz, 1993:1). One of the most profound changes evident in coverage was that this would be a war of almost instantaneous coverage, with even the opening bombing raid on Baghdad being broadcast live on Cable News Network (CNN).

Secretary of Defense Cheney came under heavy criticism from the media for his handling of the press pool during Operation JUST CAUSE. To prevent news leaks, he delayed deployment of the pool until 7:30 p.m., after the evening’s news broadcasts. This meant that the pool could not arrive in Panama until hours after the invasion began. To avoid the same situation with the Gulf deployment, dubbed DESERT SHIELD, he actively sought visas for U.S. journalist from the Saudis. He activated the press pool, and the first journalists arrived on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1990 (Watson, 1991:203). The Secretary ordered his staff to arrange accommodations for the press at Dhahran, morning press conferences by Central Command (CENTCOM), access to key officers who could keep the press informed, and round the clock updates from the Pentagon. By all accounts, the military handled DESERT SHIELD better than all previous operations. The deployment was getting positive press, and the television pictures of massive cargo jets landing in Saudi Arabia every 15 minutes may have convinced the Iraqis that further conquest would meet heavy resistance. One can only speculate if those images on CNN of hundreds of armed U.S. troops stepping off C-5 transport jets caused Iraqi lead Saddam Hussein to hesitate and not invade Saudi soil. From this perspective, the military’s initial support of the press and attempts to give them access to appropriate information can be deemed a success.

It was not long, however, before problems occurred and the military and the media once again ran head long into conflict. The military imposed ground rules on the media to protect combat forces. Despite General Schwarzkopf's public statements about openness with the press, many who knew the General well understood that he shared the same view as many other Vietnam veteran officers – that the press was not to be trusted. Many officers possessed the deeply held conviction that biased journalism in Vietnam had turned the American public against the Vietnam war effort, and if given half the chance, ratings-hungry journalists would portray the military in a bad light (Fialka, 1991:xi). Ironically, many journalists also drew on the Vietnam experience in the five months preceding the ground offensive. They openly clamored for a return to a kind of Golden Age of access that they had enjoyed in Vietnam. There, the press was allowed to hitchhike unescorted to U.S. units in the field. There was no censorship to their stories and reporters could go where they wanted, when they wanted. When the U.S. military would not concede to the press' demands for access, negative publicity was the immediate result. Michael Gartner, president of NBC news, retaliated on the op-ed page of the *Wall Street Journal* (August 30, 1990), when he wrote,

Here's something you should know about the war [sic] that's going on in the Gulf: much of the news that you read or hear is being censored....There is no excuse for this kind of censorship [which] exceeds even the most stringent censorship of World War II. The press was shut out of Grenada , cooped up in Panama, and put on a late plane [carrying the press pool] into Saudi Arabia. Once again, the Pentagon had no use for the facts. (Fialka, 1991:x)

What the press failed to recognize, Fialka writes, is the distinct differences between Vietnam and the Gulf. Vietnam was a low intensity conflict against a foe who could not easily exploit inadvertent breaches of security. The press put few, if any, logistics demands on the military; seldom were there more than 40 journalists in the field

on any given day. The Gulf build up was huge, one of the largest mobilizations in history. This huge and rapid deployment involved 28 other nations in addition to the U.S. forces (Fialka, 1991:xii). With hundreds of journalists descending upon the region, it would have been a monumental, if not impossible, task for the military to adhere to all their requests for access to units.

Despite intense criticism, the military held its ground and refused to allow reporters free access to roam the theater at will. Reporters who broke the rules and went to forbidden zones unaccompanied were sometimes taken into custody and shipped out of the area. No fewer than 24 reporters were sent back to the U.S. for violating security rules (Greenberg and Gantz, 1993:30). In this area, it appears that the military learned a hard lesson from Vietnam; that if the press is not subject to security restrictions early on, the military will lose control of the public relations arena. Expulsion of reporters who break the rules is a double-edged sword. The military sends a strong message to the press that it is serious about its restrictions, however, the military risks the wrath of the press in the form of negative stories and cries that they are stifling free speech. There is evidence that the U.S. military learned from the British as to how to handle reporters who break media pool restrictions. Mort Rosenblum writes:

Only one reporter, an NBC correspondent, sneaked into the Falklands' capital, Port Stanley, under the British blackout. He was caught after twelve hours. No one witnessed any action until the generals decided it was time. The Pentagon went green with envy. (Rosenblum, 1993:237)

To some, the military was, in a way, "vindicated" for their staunch stance regarding reporters access when a CBS news crew broke away and was captured by the Iraqis near the Kuwaiti border on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1991. Reporter Bob Simon and his crew were taken to Basra, then to Baghdad, where they were beaten, placed in isolation, and

interrogated (Watson, 1991:207). For weeks, their status was listed as “missing.” Reporters in the region feared the worst, and constantly peppered military briefers for information concerning their fate. While expressing its concern and pledging to do all it could, the military insisted the issue would not be pursued with Iraq because “it wasn’t part of the war” (Watson, 1991:207). The message sent was loud and clear – if you break the rules, don’t expect the military to bail you out. Interestingly enough, when all POWs were released by Iraq, Simon and his team were released also. The press now had additional information provided by the reporters to reflect upon. Simon, who is Jewish, was accused by the Iraqis of being a spy for the Israeli secret service, Mossad. The Iraqis threatened to execute him. Soon after his release, he went on CBS’s widely watched news program *60 Minutes*. He appeared tired, unshaven, and visibly shaken by his ordeal. His anger was quite evident, especially when he commented that he would not have hesitated killing one of his Iraqi guards any more so than killing a cockroach in his cell (60 Minutes, 1991). Since so many reporters were interested in Mr. Simon’s fate while he was in captivity, they probably took notice of this interview. One can only speculate if Mr. Simon’s words gave any of them pause about possibly risking the same fate by roaming a war zone.

Another aspect of the military reaction to the press during the Gulf War was in its preparedness and the selection of excellent spokesmen. John Fialka wrote in his book *Hotel Warriors*:

Everybody seemed prepared. The military had digested stacks of lessons-learned reports from seven years of experimentation with combat pools since the Reagan administration's much criticized, blacked-out invasion of Grenada in 1983. A team of no fewer than eight colonels who had worked on the reports was flown to Dhahran by the Pentagon to bless the new pool system that was now taking shape. (Fialka, 1991:4)

In short, the military had "done its homework" with respect to the media during the Gulf War and won some measure of success by doing so. Unlike previous conflicts, the military realized that dissemination of information during a war is, in effect, crisis management. At first, the military encountered a bit a trouble finding the best spokesman. The author recalls a televised briefing early in the war where the official spokesman was an Air Force Lt. Colonel fighter pilot. His response to almost every question was that he was "not allowed to give out that information." At first, the press appeared amused, laughing at his mantra. Soon, however, their amusement grew to frustration and anger as he answered each question the same way. The next day, he was not the official spokesman. Ultimately, they settled on General Neal, who played the role brilliantly. General Kelly was chosen to be the Pentagon's official spokesman, who was an adept briefer and had a degree in journalism (Greenburg and Gantz, 1993:32). In the end, no briefer performed as well as General Schwarzkopf himself. He had an authoritative presence, as well as a wealth of information at his fingertips. He was wonderfully articulate with details. In addition, he possessed a quick wit, which he employed brilliantly. Once, when responding to a particular issue raised by a reporter that he knew was false, the General simply quipped that it was "Bovine Scatology." The room erupted with laughter.

The intelligence and education of the American military proved to be an asset when dealing with the press. As will be explored later, the media are, for the most part, highly educated. The media seemed to give a new-found respect to the military officers briefing them. In 1991, Time magazine wrote:

The remarkable professionalism...exemplified most visibly by the smooth TV performances of top military officers...Intelligent, frank, sometimes eloquent, these men seemed to personify a new class of American military leaders who do not only have a thorough grasp of their trade but also demonstrate broad political and worldly sophistication – not to mention PR savvy. (Greenberg and Gantz, 1993:32)

The final word on spokesmen would be incomplete without mentioning Secretary Cheney's official spokesman, Pete Williams. Mr. Williams possessed, like his military counterparts, all the ingredients of an excellent briefer; he is articulate, knowledgeable, and candid. There was one other significant aspect, however, to his style that proved to be so successful to the military effort during the Gulf War. That ingredient was his empathy for the journalists themselves. This may have much to do with the fact that Mr. Williams was a former journalist himself (he presently has left Government service and is employed by ABC news). He was a tireless advocate for a press corps who was starved for knowledge, any knowledge, of the war in the Gulf. After hostilities were over, he said this to reporters at the National Press Club:

We could have done a better job of helping reporters in the field. Judging from what I've heard from reporters who went out on pools, those I've heard from so far, we had some outstanding escorts, but we must improve that process. Escort officers should not throw themselves in front of the camera when one of the troops utters a forbidden word, as happens on that piece of ABC news tape from last fall that is shown every time there's a program about the press...Our first obligation is to get reporters out with the action, so that journalists are eyewitnesses to history. (Smith, 1992:176)

Williams' tendency to tell reporters that the media/military relationship does not have to be a zero-sum game serves the relationship well. If the military credibility goes up, the media credibility need not go down. This approach is useful to the military, because it does not put reporters on the defensive, and makes them feel that their concerns are being addressed. Williams, however, was not without his critics. Mostly, he became the designated "spear catcher" for press anger about military restrictions. NBC reporter Arthur Kent demanded, "Why are you trying to put your hands so far into our business? We're not telling you how to run the war. We're just trying to cover it. Why do you want to control us so completely?" (Kent, 1991)

One of the most controversial media figures during the Gulf War was CNN war correspondent Peter Arnet. His situation was unique, because he was reporting the news censored by the Iraqi government throughout the war. He had many critics who accused him of aiding the Iraqis and hurting the Coalition's side in the propaganda war. The military had no control over Arnet's reporting, since he was using an INMARSAT (International Maritime Satellite) to report his stories directly from Baghdad. The Iraqis were eager to get *their* side of the story to the rest of the world via CNN. When Arnet reported that a supposed biological weapons factory that had been bombed by the U.S. Air Force was really a baby milk plant, General Powell took to the microphones to dispute him. Arnet defended himself and his actions after the war, "The reason I stayed in Baghdad is quite simple: Reporting is what I do for a living. I made the commitment to stay in journalism years ago" (Smith, 1992:309). Since the military public affairs officers are unable to handle a situation like Mr. Arnet's, there appears little that can be done to broach the problem. It is interesting to note that the Arnet case was handled in



the political realm. Wyoming Senator Alan Simpson decided to rebuke Arnet's coverage during the war:

Day and night during those first few shocking days of the war, I watched with increasing alarm – and then plain irritation – as Peter Arnet broadcast from somewhere in downtown Baghdad....I could not for the life of me understand how an American journalist could justify reporting on a war from inside the enemy's capital city...In the Gulf War, Peter Arnet's viewers saw nothing more or less than what the Iraqi government wanted them to see. Period. (Simpson, 1997:121)

Later, Senator Simpson went on to call Arnet a "sympathizer" with disastrous results.

Other reporters reacted by coming to Arnet's defense, and the Senator eventually apologized.

There is some evidence to affirm that Mr. Arnet was being skillfully manipulated by the Iraqi government for propaganda purposes. After an allied assault on a target, Mr. Arnet arrived to broadcast live on CNN via INMARSAT. Mr. Arnet reported, "While we were there, a distraught woman shouted insults to the press and vented anger at the West." Woman: "Mea culpa! Mea culpa! All of you are responsible, all of you! Bombing the people for the sake of oil! Hunted as if we are Iranian! We are human beings! Who made this area like this! The flames in the area, it's the West! Mea culpa, the blood, she is on your head! (Bozelle, 1991).

The televised images of this exchange were no doubt quite powerful, and were broadcast worldwide. It can be argued that reports such as this one out of Baghdad were detrimental to the U.S. war effort. Three weeks later, however, *Newsweek's* Jonathon Alter wrote,

Iraq has been polishing up its propaganda game for years. A woman wailing in TV-perfect English about civilian casualties turned out, as CNN later reported, to be an Iraqi official (aide to the Foreign Affairs

Undersecretary). She also showed up on French TV wailing in French. (Bozelle, 1991)

Senator Simpson was not the only high ranking U.S. official to be critical of press coverage during the war. General Colin Powell watched a news interview in which the reporter was saying that half the troops he had talked to were very unhappy about the way things were going in the Gulf.

What the hell are they talking about? Powell asked himself. The report offered nothing hard. It was foolish, but it reminded him that if war came, it would be on television instantly, bringing home the action, death, consequences and emotions even more graphically than during Vietnam. The reporters and the cameras would be there to record each step, vastly complicating all military tasks. Powell was sure of one thing: a prolonged war on television could become impossible, unsupportable at home. (Woodward, 1991:315)

Interestingly, it was a skit performed on "Saturday Night Live" that helped convince the Bush Administration that they were capturing the hearts and minds of the American public. Howard Kurtz writes in *Media Circus* that this incident served as the greatest indignity for the press of the entire war. The skit lampooned the media mob in Saudi Arabia. Kurtz claims that here, after all, was the hipper-than-thou show, portraying the press as a bunch of buffoons.

"I am happy to take any questions you might have," the handsome Pentagon briefer in khaki fatigues began, "with the understanding that there are certain sensitive areas that I'm just not going to get into, particularly information that may be useful to the enemy." A scruffy reporter piped up: "What date are we going to start the ground attack?" Another shouted: "Where would you say our forces are most vulnerable to attack and how could the Iraqis best exploit those weaknesses?" And a haughty woman: "I understand there are passwords our troops use on the front lines. Could you give us some examples of these?" (Kurtz, 1993:216)

The press, for its side, had some criticism of the military too. Coverage of the wounded, prisoner-of-war camps, and ground combat were left uncovered by wars end.

Reporters complain that they were denied access to these stories. Their claim is that the result was a packaged, clean war, where smart weapons surgically destroyed their targets (Watson, 1991:208). Also, some in the media claim that General Schwarzkopf did not show reporters camera footage of precision weapons that missed their targets. Many journalists complain that by presenting such a “clean” war to the public, the next war will seem desirable since the public will be tricked into assuming that all future wars can be similarly free from bloodshed.

Veteran television news anchor Walter Cronkite had this to say about military efforts to manage press coverage during the war,

It is a political lesson they’ve learned, that if you show the public too much of the gore and the horror of war, they’re going to turn against the war. Sanitizing the war for the purpose of keeping American morale, interest in the war, support for the war is almost criminal. (Cronkite, 1997)

## **Somalia**

The last two most recent operations that will be examined here, Somalia and Rwanda, focus on a new evolution of the relationship between the military and the media. The question raised is a valid one: is the media driving international politics. The theory goes that the media is armed with the power to project images into the living rooms of US homes at any time. The influence of the press on public opinion is enormous. Technology today allows the press to use satellite television to report the worst of human suffering onto the world screen, thereby supplanting the role traditionally afforded to diplomacy and launching directly into military involvement. Consider what Johanna Neuman wrote in her book *Lights, Camera, War*:

In Somalia, the conventional wisdom holds that pictures got the United States in, and pictures forced the United States out. Those who hold this

view argue that the vivid and wrenching images of starving Somali children forced President Bush to act, and that the equally horrible pictures of the soldier's corpse compelled President Clinton to announce a departure date for U.S. troops. "Once again, television images are shaping American foreign policy," wrote the *Economist*. The result: "Damage to America's policy in Somalia, and beyond." (Neuman, 1996:228)

One other aspect of the media's role in Somalia was at the very beginning of the operation. U.S. Navy Seals were assaulting the beaches of Somalia at night in December 1992. The only resistance they encountered was the hot glare of television lights, blinding them and forcing the Seals to remove their night vision goggles. Angry letters to the press were sent to major media outlets, accusing them of interfering with the military. However, that is not the complete story. Military officials had directed journalists on the beach to the best position from which to catch the action (Neuman, 1996:227). Clearly, the military should carefully consider when and where it allows journalists access to military operations such as Somalia. Should there have been local armed resistance (as there later was) the lives of the Seals could have been place in jeopardy by the press.

## **Rwanda**

In 1994, the small African country of Rwanda became a blood bath. Refugees by the thousands huddled in filthy camps, and the press began to take notice. A quote from an article entitled "Kingdom of Revenge" appeared in Time magazine, "From the beginning of the crisis the Clinton Administration stoutly resisted leading a full-scale relief effort. But in late July, as the magnitude of the refugee problem became apparent, the President took stronger measures, ordering a round-the-clock airlift of food, water and medicine" (Jamieson, 1995:77). The political pressure placed on the U.S. and other governments to do *something* to alleviate this type of human suffering can be enormous.

There are many who now accept the fact that the media can and do have a role in influencing foreign policy, necessitating the need for military involvement. Patrick O'Herrernan noted that news organizations were to a significant degree the "handmaidens of government when it came to foreign policy" (Bennett and Paletz, 1991:231). The explosion of information technology has made this easier. Johanna Neuman writes:

In the era of satellite television, the starvation in Rwanda could seem closer than the neighbor's child abuse. The challenge for leaders in the digital age will be to reach across the chat rooms and unfettered information of the Internet with the voice of authority. As radio required a pleasing voice, digital will likely demand a commanding presence. Words will still play their role, and symbols too, but leaders will no longer be able to assume the stage. (Neuman, 1996:262)

During an interview with Brigadier General H. J. Ingersoll (Ret), I asked him about his experiences as the Director of Mobility Forces (DIRMOBFOR) during the Rwandan airlift, known as Operation SUPPORT HOPE. With regard to the role of the media getting the U.S. involved: "The media was instrumental in keeping the plight of the Rwandan people in the public's eye. In other words, the media raised everyone's awareness and kept the focus on the situation. However, I wouldn't say solely created the impression to use military forces; it certainly gave our involvement impetus" (Ingersoll, 1997).

## **IV. Culture Clash: The Media versus the Military**

### **Genesis of Tension**

While no profession is entirely monolithic, there is data available that indicates the pervasive “view” of the military by the press, and vice versa. Institutionally, the military and the media are both obliged to serve the public good. As stated earlier, both sides are Constitutionally empowered to perform their specific tasks.

The Congress shall have the power to...provide for the common defense...to declare war...to make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces (Article I, Section 8); the President shall be commander in chief of the Army and Navy (Article II, Section 2); Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech or the press (Article I). (Matthews, 1991:ix)

Despite their sharing of the same source document for their mission statement, their very missions appear to be antithetical. While the military culture derives from the fact that it is an agent of its government, answerable to the political process and constrained by bureaucracy, the media is not. The media, by some accounts, do appear to relish the role of watchdog, but hate to be watched themselves. Hamilton and Krimsky write:

Journalists become outraged whenever it appears someone is hemming them in. They want to know where and how much legislators earn in speaking fees, but don't want anyone looking at their own finances, even if their outside income might show their own ties to special interest. (Hamilton and Krimsky, 1996:133)

The media culture is derived from the seeking of facts, and seeking them quickly. It can even be argued that the media benefits from conflict. It is no surprise, then, that

this culture clash is very real. General Schwarzkopf charged that during the war CNN was “aiding and abetting an enemy” (Smith, 1992:60). General Michael J. Dugan believes that the sources of tension between the military and the media need to be better understood by both parties. He writes:

Culturally, the military is remote from the mainstream of society, and its members live in a subculture with inherent barriers to external communications. There are different words, different uses of the same words, different living conditions, expectations, self-images, and more. The differences are neither good nor bad; they simply exist and, accordingly, must be interpreted by the media to serve a mainstream audience. (Smith, 1992:61)

Moreover, while there may be a culture clash between the military and society as a whole, the chasm seems widest with the press. Peter Braestup, writing in Lloyd Matthews book *Newsman and National Defense*, opined that the journalists who flew to Saudi Arabia to cover the Gulf war epitomized this clash of world views. Demographically, they were mostly men and women under 40 years of age and unfamiliar with the military and its ways. To them, it had been 15 years since Hanoi “liberated” South Vietnam and almost 20 years since the draft was eliminated. He calls this the ensuing “divorce” between the military and the young, college-educated segment of society. This divide is no more evident than in the ranks of journalism. While the Pentagon had gone to great efforts after Grenada to educate journalists about the military, the journalists did not reciprocate. In 1990, only 22 out of several hundred reporters in the Washington bureau of the *Wall Street Journal* had ever been in uniform (Matthews, 1991:xvi).

## **Military Culture**

Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman did a survey of the attitudes, social origins and voting habits of the American military. Interestingly enough, senior military officers tended to correlate well with those of businessmen.

In general, the military remain conservative on social values, responsive to political candidates who favor higher defense spending, and far less apt than media people to see the United States and the West as the source of the Third World's problems...The social values of senior officers are closer to Middle America than to those of the more permissive members of the media on such matters as adultery, homosexuality, and abortion. (Matthews, 1991:xvii)

Most military officers are educated, but they do not come from elite colleges. This does not include those officers from the military colleges. Geographically, most of the officers come from what is commonly referred to as "Middle America." One of the differences between the military and mainstream society, however, is the military officer's proclivity to keep going back to school. Also, those officers who serve in peacetime assignments overseas tend to develop a certain amount of worldly sophistication (Matthews, 1991:xvii).

To some observers, the military does not deserve the stuffy reputation assigned to it. Peter Braestrup writes: "By British or German standards, the American military culture is highly informal, especially in the Air Force and Army. These services, in peacetime, tend to reflect, to a considerable degree, the manners and mores of the larger society" (Matthews, 1991:xvii).

Military members, especially officers, are deeply aware and knowledgeable regarding the world of politics (Matthews, 1991:xvii). This should not appear too



surprising. It is a rational assumption that because the military is dependent on the whims of Washington regarding the defense budget, its officers would pay close attention to the goings on in Congress and the Presidency. Moreover, the military members tend to play close attention to the prevailing political rhetoric regarding foreign policy, lest some crisis involve their profession or themselves personally.

Some officers, more than others, may have a certain amount of knowledge of the media and experience dealing with the press. Commenting further about the U.S. airlift in Rwanda, General Ingersoll said in response to a question about preparedness of officers to deal with press, "Yes. I received training at my staff college and Air War College. Senior leaders get adequate training and plenty of experience dealing with the media" (Ingersoll, 1997). Other officers may not feel as confident. A Lieutenant Colonel at Army War College reported that more than half of his classmates had never spent more than one day with the media; and 69 percent had never spent more than two days. He concluded:

Many senior officers have had very little personal experience in a direct working relationship with the media and have had even less formal training about how the media works or its roles and missions in American society. In spite of this, they hold very strong negative views about the media. (Matthews, 1991:40)

The fact that most members of the military have little hands-on experience with reporters is significant. If the military fail to understand the media, the relationship will suffer. Interestingly enough, the Air Force publishes a handbook that gives advice to military personnel about meeting the media. One of the points it emphasizes is that military members should learn from the other side. "Try to empathize with a reporter's

needs and priorities. Ask him or her about deadlines, how stories are assigned, how you can take the initiative in getting a particular story told” (O’Rourke, 1989:5).

The fact that the press has never interviewed most members of the military directly, however, does not preclude military officers from learning how the press thinks. If the technological explosion and information revolution is argued as globally influential, why can not a military member make assumptions of the media by virtue of their vast amount of published and broadcast work that is transmitted with ever increasing volume? Why is it improbable that a military member can make value judgments about the press based on their work that gives the military the ability to ascertain their motivations, mores, passions, and interests? The task is not impossible, and military members have a vested interest in understanding this powerful institution. In fact, it appears that some members of the military are searching for answers as to how the press polices itself. While members of the press are aware that the military is held accountable by civilian leadership and by the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), it is not entirely clear to all members of the military what standards guide the media. Richard Halloran addressed this issue when he wrote,

At the Air War College, an officer rose in the auditorium to ask, “What a lot of us have on our minds is: Do you guys have any ethics?” The answer is yes. Reflecting the independence of the press invested by the First Amendment, there is no sweeping code of ethics imposed from the outside. Each publication or network fashions its own, some of which is written, other of which is understood. Professional groups, such as Sigma Delta Chi, have canons that have been published as voluntary guidelines. (Matthews, 1991:43)

Although it may change from organization to organization, members of the press in general have a series of rules that they must adhere to in the area of accountability, inaccuracy, and invasion of privacy. Peers will soon shun a totally unethical journalist.

While some may doubt this fact, consider the recent case of journalist Stephen Glass. While only 25 years old, he had already been tenured as an associate editor for the *New Republic*. In a short but impressive journalistic career, he had published 41 articles. His colleagues described him in terms such as brilliant and inventive. In short, however, he may indeed have been too inventive for his own good. Glass recently published a story called "Hack Heaven" in which he describes a 15-year-old computer hacker who manages to break the security of a software firm named Jukt Micronics. Glass described how the hacker posted every employee's salary on the company web site along with dozens of pictures of naked women. An intriguing story, however, it was discovered that Glass manufactured the story out of whole cloth. He even went so far as to create a web site for the fictitious company, and use it to denounce his own story. This revelation shocked the journalistic community, and they collectively quickly distanced themselves from Glass. Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post* wrote,

For this, Glass was summarily fired and—as should be the case with corrupt journalists—publicly disgraced. Quickly and with commendable alacrity, Glass' other outlets followed suit. *George* magazine and Harper's let him go and, based on a hunch, *The Washington Post*, which used Glass once on a free-lance basis, is not going to do so again. (Cohen, 1998)

One of the more intriguing aspects of journalistic ethics is the change that technology is bringing to the media. Recently, Matt Drudge (publisher of an internet web page) addressed the National Press Club. Drudge's site, titled "The Drudge Report", has generated considerable debate in the journalistic community. While introducing Drudge to the club, the host noted that his methods were suspect in the eyes of most journalists. Drudge is not an accredited journalist, and acts as his own editor. The media, however, cannot ignore his phenomenal success. His site receives over 6 million visitors a month,

and he has been credited with scooping several important stories. When asked a question about his legitimacy and personal ethics, his answer was laced with a hint of sarcasm at the established media. In it, he pointed out the mainstream press' own recent ethical dilemmas.

You know, I have some—there's different levels of journalism; I'll concede that. One of my competitors is Salon Magazine On-Line, who I understand is the president's favorite web site. And there's a reporter there, Jonathon Broder. He was fired for plagiarism from the *Chicago Sun Times*. And I read that in the *Weekly Standard*. But do I believe it? Because as much as I love the *Weekly Standard*, they had to settle a big one with Deepak Chopra, if I recall. I heard that on CNN. But hold on. Didn't CNN have the little problem with Richard Jewel? I think Tom Brokaw told me that, and then I think Tom Brokaw also had to settle with Richard Jewell. I read that in the *Wall Street Journal*. But didn't the *Wall Street Journal* just lose a huge libel case down in Texas, a record libel, \$200 million worth of jury? I tell you, it's creative enough for an in-depth piece in the *New Republic*. But I fear people would think it was made up. (Drudge, 1998)

It is true that some reporters attempt to only bend, but not break, the rules. Still, the military culture tends to harbor hostility towards the press. Lieutenant General Bernard E. Trainor, U.S Marine Corps (Ret), writes that when he once took questions from young officers and cadets regarding the media, the veneer of civility quickly evaporated. Questions turned into ugly accusations, and it was clear to him that "today's officer corps carries as part of its cultural baggage a loathing of the press" (Smith, 1991:69). He goes on to make this poignant statement regarding the relationship of the two institutions:

The military is hostile toward the journalist, while the journalist is indifferent toward the military. To the journalist, the military is just another huge bureaucracy to report on, no different from Exxon or Congress. But whereas businessmen and politicians try to enlist journalists for their own purposes, the military man tries to avoid them,

and when he cannot, he faces the prospect defensively with a mixture of fear, dread, and contempt. (Smith, 1991:72)

Retired General Bernard Trainer feels that there will always be a divergence of interests between the military and the media. He argues that by its very nature, the press is skeptical and intrusive. The problem, he sees, is in attempting to minimize this natural friction. One area of concern is that the all volunteer force has, in some ways, isolated the military from the culture at large. General Trainer writes:

The volunteer force in a subtle way has contributed to this friction. At the height of the Cold War and throughout Vietnam, the military was at the forefront of the American consciousness. Scarcely a family did not have a loved one liable to the draft. The shadow of national service cast itself over the family dinner table...With the end of the draft and the advent of a volunteer army, this awareness disappeared, along with the pertinence of the older generation of warriors. Only those families of those who volunteered for the service kept touch with the modern Army. (Matthews, 1991:123)

## **Media Culture**

There are various branches of the news media. These include newspapers, television, news magazines, the Internet, and wire services. Each branch has its own unique perspective and sub-culture, much like the four military services. Their unofficial mission and entire public theology that they share is to seek the facts, and act as watchdog over government. Newsmen are both fact gatherers and story tellers. This is an important concept for the military member to grasp. A journalist's product is not a report or a study; it is their *story*. Much of what is published as news today is simply a series of good stories. These are best described as dramas with human appeal. If a plane crashes, that is a good story, because it speaks of the drama of human tragedy. Logically speaking, the military member must be aware that wars are among the ultimate in

in “stories.” Death, destruction, and violence on a massive scale are important events to the journalists who cover them. Veteran war correspondents like Peter Arnet are given badges of honor by other journalists who admire them for “being there.” Roger Rosenblatt wrote in *Time* magazine:

Journalism tends to focus on the poor [for example] when the poor make news, usually dramatic news like a tenement fire or a march on Washington. But the poor are usually poor all the time. It is not journalism’s ordinary business to deal with the unstartling normalities of life. Reporters need a *story*, something shapely and elegant. (Matthews, 1991:xx)

Peter Braestrup writes that the life of a journalist appeals to certain personality types, much like military life. However, the recruits of journalism are quite different from those who choose to join the military. He goes on to give his assessment of the journalistic ranks. They are observers, they have little time, they like to reduce complexity to a series of clichés, they like to be in the know, they are quickly bored or frustrated when there is no news, and they hate surprises (Matthews, 1991:xx).

The Lichter and Rothman study of 238 journalists provided some of the most telling demographic data about journalist in the media today. The following assessment of their study was published in Matthews’ book, *Newsman and National Defense*:

The authors conducted hour-long interviews with 238 journalists at America’s most influential media outlets [*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and the news divisions of CBS, NBC, and PBS]. The result is a systematic sample of men and women who put together the news at America’s most important media outlets – the media elite...The demographics are clear. The media are a homogenous and cosmopolitan group...with differentially eastern, urban, ethnic, upper-class, and secular roots. (Matthews, 1991:62)

Consider these key findings listed below in table 1.

**Table 1. Backgrounds of Reporters**

Have college degrees	93%
Hail from New York, New Jersey, or Pennsylvania	40%
Claim “seldom” or “never” attend religious services	86%
Male	79%
White	95%
Father occupation “professional”	40%
Postgraduate study	55%
Religion “none”	50%

In their book *Hold the Press*, two veteran reporters named Maxwell Hamilton and George Krinsky give their assessment to the journalistic ranks:

Journalists dress poorly...because they don't want to be in fashion. They fancy themselves outsiders, detached...Sixty-seven percent of the journalists have no children at home, compared with 60 percent of the total workforce...They are cynical about the people they cover...(Hamilton and Krinsky, 1996:114-116)

The authors go on in great detail as to other assessments of the journalistic profession.

These generalizations include an altruistic streak regarding improving society, the kind of students in college who disliked business courses and gravitated towards the humanities.

They quickly learn that in order to succeed, they must employ “moxie” – a Yiddish word for courage with a hint of aggression (Hamilton and Krinsky, 1996:123).

While not all media coverage of the military is negative, there appear to be some reporters who are suspicious, if not hostile, to the military. Consider the comments of CBS reporter Richard Threlkeld regarding U.S. soldiers in the Gulf:

And why do they do these unnatural, unhuman things, these soldiers? Not for God or country or freedom or even because they've been ordered to. They do them, finally, as James Jones, the author put it, because they don't want to appear unmanly in front of their friends. (Threlkeld, 1991)

In a similar vein, there were some reports in the media that were highly critical of the troops themselves. Sometimes, this is reported in a context of sympathy for other nations. *The Washington Post's* Colman McCarthy said this on CNN's Crossfire following the Iraqi surrender during the Gulf War:

Well, they (U.S. soldiers) really didn't risk that much, number one. And second, to honor people who believe in violence is to honor the ethic of violence. And if you believe violence solves problems, you overlook quite a lot of morality...Why honor these people? Instead of celebrating, we ought to have a national month of mourning for what we did in that area of the world. (Crossfire, 1991)

## **Media Coverage**

Listed below are some statistical charts dealing with network coverage of issues that could be of interest or importance from the military's standpoint. They were compiled by the Media Research Center (MRC) based in Alexandria Virginia. The first issue is the network news stories devoted to coverage of defense spending. The data was compiled and published in 1990 (see Figure 1 below).



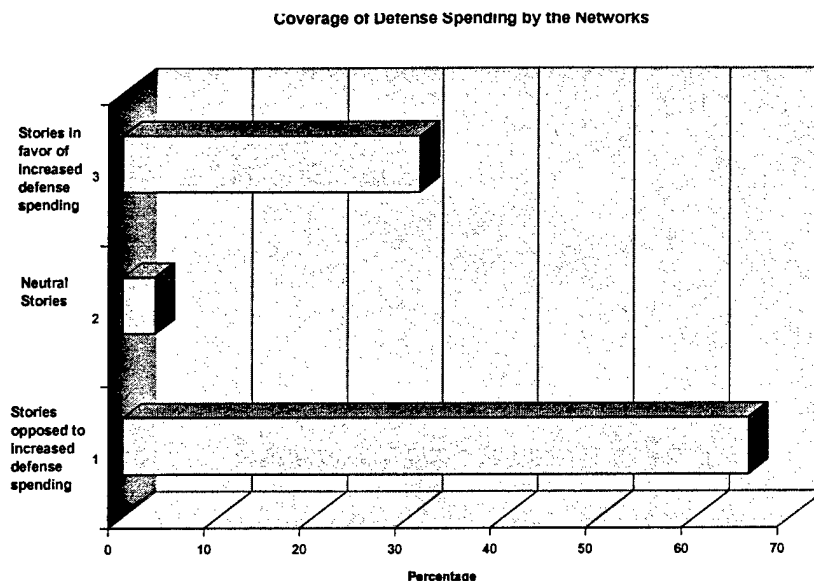


Figure 1. Coverage Devoted to Defense Spending (MRC, 1990)

Broken down by network, the MRC compiled this graphic to show each individual network's coverage of defense spending. It appears that NBC was the least balanced, with 76.4 percent of its coverage was opposed to increased defense spending (see figure 2 below).

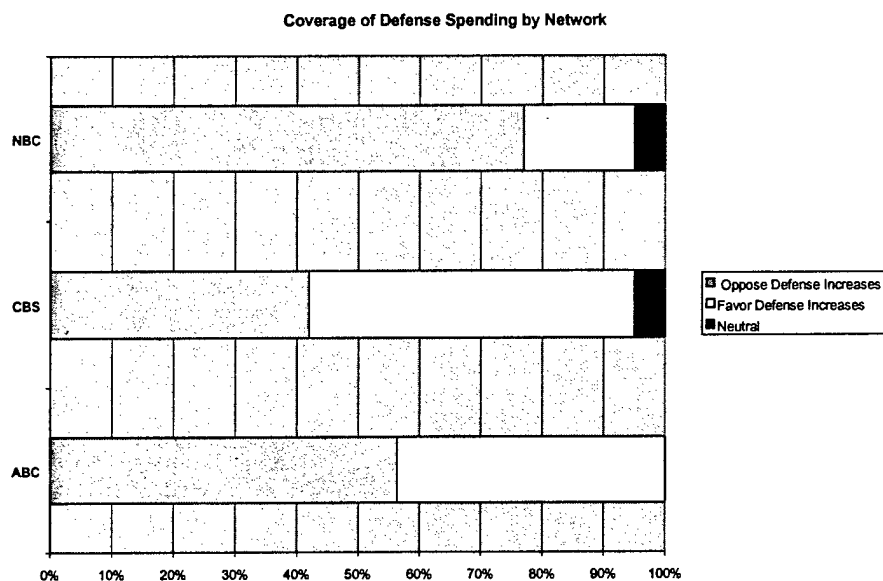


Figure 2. Coverage of Defense Spending by Network (MRC, 1990)

The subject of defense spending is often times discussed along with the sapping of resources that could have gone to domestic programs. Juan Williams of *The Washington Post* wrote,

When you talk about the spending during the Reagan years on defense, you're talking about absolute abdication of responsibility to domestic policy and issues in this country, and it's totally without regard to the fact that these people were spending hundreds of dollars on toilet seats, not even advanced technology. (Williams, 1991)

The journalists were polled as to what they held as their political viewpoint. This is contrasted against an assessment of the public in general. Overall, most journalists think of themselves as overwhelmingly liberal or moderate as opposed to conservative. See figure listed below (Figure 3).

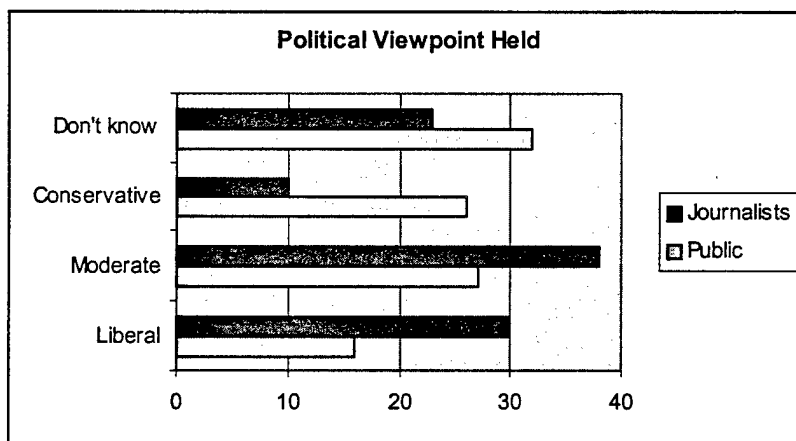


Figure 3. Political Viewpoint of the Public versus Journalists (MRC, 1990)

A 1986 study was conducted by the National Conservative Foundation (NCF) used the Nexis newspaper data retrieval system to study the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, Associated Press (AP), and United Press International (UPI) to determine the tone of coverage of Grenada. Nearly 70 percent of the 155 stories analyzed dealt with opposition to the U.S. action (see Figure 4 below).

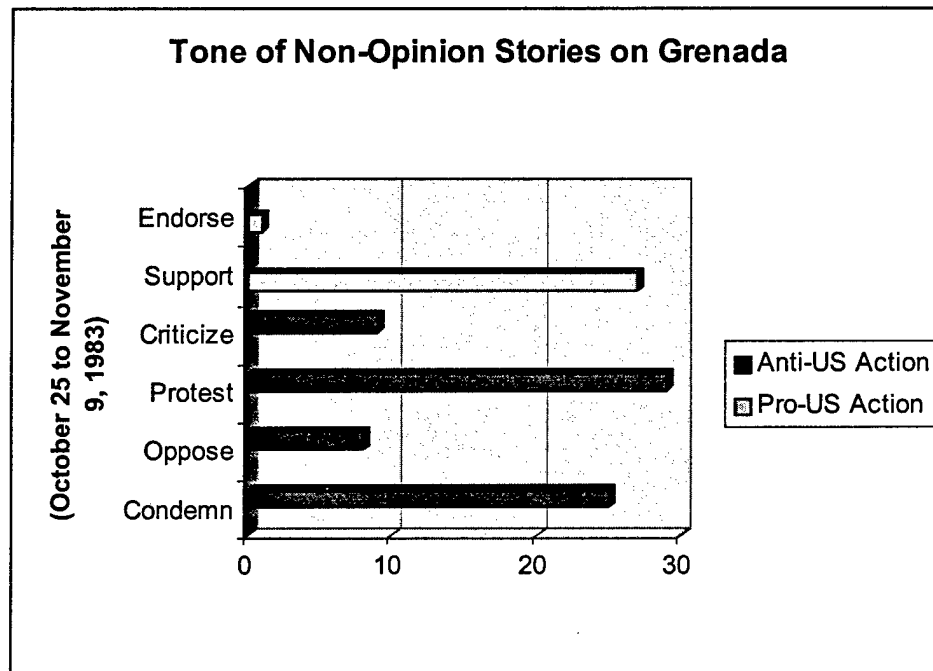


Figure 4. Tone of Stories (MRC, 1990)

While these statistical charts are by no means a complete assessment of the tone of media reporting on military issues, they do offer some insight into media coverage. A study of media bias and reporting trends in stories is a valid subject and one that could be explored as a future research project. Many members of the press reject the notion that their reporting is biased or unfair. Richard Halloran defended the press' objectivity when he wrote,

What is said to be slanted news, however, often depends far more on the reader than the writer. It is a question, in the worn analogy, of seeing the bottle half empty or half full. Perhaps the objective way would be to describe the 16-ounce bottle as holding eight ounces of liquid and letting

the reader decide for himself...Increasingly, the role of journalism in America is not merely to describe what's in the bottle but to explain why and how it got that way and what it means to the community or the republic...That reporters are not objective is partly true because no human being is fully objective. (Matthews, 1991:46)

The attempt to "prove" that the press has an inherent bias has proved somewhat elusive. Methods to document any inherent bias include: surveys of the political attitudes of journalists, studies of journalists previous political connections, collections of quotations in which prominent journalists reveal their true beliefs, and using the Nexis computer system to focus on keywords and phrases (Barbour, 1994:21). Organizations like the Media Research Center (MRC) look for a liberal bias in the press. Conversely, an organization named Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) look for a conservative bias.

If bias does exist in the press corps, the definitive proof is difficult to document completely. Steve Allen writes, "It should be noted that, in the case of media bias, there is no 'smoking gun' –no single piece of evidence so incriminating that the defendant breaks down on the witness stand and confesses (Barbour, 1994:20). The answer to the question of media bias is an important one, especially to a military that depends so heavily on public support for success in war or other operations.

## V. Recommendations and Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to give the reader a greater understanding of the military/media relationship from both a historical and modern perspective. In a global sense, the world is now linked via satellite, and the transmissions that the media can send across television screens of real world events staggers the imagination. Richard Halloran, writing an article entitled "Soldiers and Scribblers: A Common Mission" said:

The power of the press is a myth. The press has *influence*, not power, and the distinction is important. Military officers have power in that they have the legal and, if necessary, the physical force to have orders obeyed. The press has neither, and cannot enforce anything. (Matthews, 1991:41)

Mr. Halloran leaves out a distinction of enormous proportions in his efforts to belittle the power of the press, namely, that the ability to influence the power brokers of the world *is in of and by itself* power of the greatest magnitude. It is important for each and every military officer to remind themselves of this fact. The press have a role, and they most certainly have a right to report to the American people what its military is doing (within the realms of proper security). This, in fact, is one of the manifestations of a free society – that no institution is beyond scrutiny. By such measure, neither are the media themselves beyond such scrutiny. A statement by General Ingersoll drives home the legitimate role of the press in military operations:

The media is not your enemy. Understand the media's need for meeting deadlines and how they work. Listen to your public affairs officer and learn how to deal with the media to your advantage. It's not necessary to be afraid of the press or to think they are looking to "get you." (Ingersoll, 1997)

In past conflicts, American history is rich with examples of how the military did not deal with the press fairly or civilly. In today's information age, it is absolutely

necessary that military officers understand that the press has a legitimate role, and the press must be allowed to fulfill that role. Still, the military must not allow itself to be bullied by negative press reports into easing what it considers to be reasonable and necessary guidelines for the press to follow during a crisis or war. Those guidelines should be fashioned and enforced with the goal of protecting the troops, accomplishing the mission, and denying the enemy sensitive information.

Members of the military must also understand a basic truth; that the culture of the media and the military clash at their very core. This is not going to change. General Dugan writes:

Can the tension between the military and the media be eliminated? No, and there are no simple answers for improving relations. Nevertheless, it would be advantageous for both institutions to find a continuing, independent forum for discussion and for researching ways to better serve the public interest. (Smith, 1992:62)

The military should cooperate professionally and to the best of its ability to accommodate the press. This may entail ways to improve the much criticized pool system used to deliver media members directly to the conflict. Moreover, the military should work as hard as possible to assist reporters who need to file and disseminate their stories. In remote locations, this can be a problem for some press agencies. As long as it does not interfere with military operations, assistance to reporters filing their stories can only be perceived as a measure of cooperation and goodwill on the part of the military.

Finally, all military members should heed the advice of Navy Captain Alan Dooley. Currently the Chief of Public Affairs for United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), he has worked for the headquarters of Navy public affairs and also for the office of public affairs for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He

issued this advice for any member of the military that will face the media: the cardinal sin of any military member is to **speculate** (Dooley, 1997). Captain Dooley's advice is to avoid this at all costs. It is unwise to give the press information that is your own personal speculation. The media deal with facts, and that is what they deserve. Ken Metzler, a professor of journalism at the University of Oregon, specializes in dealing with the media. His advice to institutions, like the military, is not to seek to avoid journalists. He feels that refusals fuel rumors and cause inaccuracies. This is because it drives reporters towards alternative sources for news. Metzler has five commandments for the wary interviewee: "Thou shalt not answer speculative questions; thou shalt not allow the interviewer to lead you astray; thou shalt not lie to a reporter; thou shalt not guess the answer; thou shalt be prepared" (Hamilton and Krinsky, 1996:105).

Interestingly enough, the end of the Gulf War may have fostered a new era of opportunity and the possibility for greater cooperation between the media and the military. Both institutions' actions (or inactions) during the war have been well scrutinized and dissected. While the military recognized early on that effective media relations were vital if the military was going to get public support for the war effort, the military was initially slow to get their public affair officers (PAO's) into the communication process. Lieutenant Colonel Childers wrote a paper for the Army War College discussing this very subject. He said,

The inaccessibility of the military to the media must, in part, be attributed to the public affairs officer. However, public affairs officers are frequently disadvantaged by the personnel system and force structure. For example, at an Army corps, the public affairs officer is a lieutenant colonel and often the lowest ranking staff officer...Nonetheless, these officers are expected to interact with a much senior staff and influence a two or three star general to do something that he may be reluctant to do with the media. (Childers, 1997:20)

Quite possibly, the only recommendation that can be made with regard to this problem is to review the way PAO's are assigned and managed within the Department of Defense. Childers recommends that once officers are assigned into the public affairs field, they should be closely monitored and mentored in order to ensure the proper progression of their careers. A pool of quality public affairs officers is the stated goal (Childers, 1997:27). Without this management of the PAO field, the services will never develop these officers into positions of future responsibility.

One other aspect of the PAO management process is their involvement with senior staff officers and planners. Army Colonel William Mulvey was the Director of Central Command's (CENTCOM) joint information bureau during the Gulf War. He said, "Until...the PAO is important on the general's staff...you're not going to get the best and brightest into public affairs" (Childers, 1997:26). Without access to senior leadership, public affairs cannot effectively deal with the media. They will not be privy to crucial information that the media may ask or seek. This disconnect has the potential to lead the military into the disastrous "credibility gap" scenario that existed during Vietnam. Or, even worse, a military person "out of the loop" may inadvertently give false information to the press. Armed with this knowledge, the press may argue that they have been lied to. Lieutenant General Walter E. Boomer is the former Chief of Marine Corps public affairs. He said, "To exclude the PAO from operational planning because the commander doesn't like the media is like excluding the medical officer because [the commander] doesn't like to deal with casualties (Childers, 1997:28).



If the media and the military can come to the realization that they need one another, then increased cooperation between the two parties may ensue. As part of a study commissioned by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Sidle wrote,

The optimum solution to ensure proper coverage of military operations is to have the military—represented by competent, professional public affairs officers personnel and commanders who understand media problems—working with the media—represented by competent, professional reporters and editors who understand media problems—in a nonantagonistic atmosphere. The panel urges both institutions to adopt this philosophy and make it work. (Sidle, 1991:63)

In a later article concerning the same subject, General Sidle again raised the possibility of getting senior military leaders and media executives together in order to improve military operations. He proposes some guidelines to follow and to accomplish this objective. First, he reasons that operational security and troop considerations take precedence over any other needs. One of his most important recommendations is that the pool system must be examined and improved. While pools should be as large as possible, a “reasonable” amount of reporters must be agreed upon so that the military is not overloaded logistically and, also, to ensure safety (Sidle, 1991:68). A public affairs escort officer, assisted by visiting unit representative should accompany each pool. This officer should be required to provide for briefings, interviews, transportation, meals, billeting, and communications means to file reporter’s stories back to their employers (Sidle, 1991:68). While problems with the pools have occurred in almost every case in which they were used, many analysts believe they were the direct result of inexperience. As previously mentioned, there is a need to plant, grow, then harvest a crop of experienced, quality public affairs officers. Once this process is initiated, the military can rely on public affairs to more adequately manage the press’ needs through the pool

system. Hopefully, this will alleviate some of the tensions and frustrations that occurred with previous pools. The objective should be to make the pools a tool, but not the sole source of information available to a reporter. Carol Morello of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* said,

I have less of a problem with pools used as one of several tools for newsgathering. What caused a lot of the tension was that they were supposed to be the only access we had. The media pools can be useful. However, they have been overused or used not only as a way to secure operational security and troop safety, but also as a way to achieve defacto censorship to achieve political objectives. (Kemper, 1996:117)

For the military to improve the pools, however, will require some capitulation on the part of the press corps. It is not enough to say that the military must improve the overall structure of the pool system. The press must be willing to cooperate and agree to police its own ranks where it pertains to violations of existing security agreements. Rogue reporters who will flaunt the regulations in order to advance their careers should be punished and expelled, and media executives should make this clear. This will entail overall reform and policy changes. Colonel Harry Summers highlighted this fact when he said,

The media are not a cohesive, unified institution. The media consist of individual, highly-competitive organizations who do not function as a single entity. Therefore, it is difficult, if not virtually impossible, to hold the media to a set of rules or principles. The degree to which any set of rules will be followed by media representatives depends on the media organization, the individual reporters or editors involved, and the given situation. (Kemper, 1996:120)

Colonel Summer's comments highlight the fact that the military itself can institute a variety of changes in order to improve relations with the media. In the end, it may prove much easier for the military to change than the press corps. Any overt attempt by the military to suggest this change should be avoided, since it may lead to the charge of

censorship. In this respect, the self-regulation process of the media must be examined.

This is a valid topic for future research.

The media and the military are both professional organizations. It is also true that there is a history of animosity between the two institutions. A useful starting point towards improving relations would be if both organizations treated one another in this light – and acted professionally. In a free society, each one has a role. It would be uplifting to know that each side understood that each party's greatest purpose for existence was in the cause of freedom.

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## VITA

Major Gregory M. Hannon was born on 20 August 1963 in Syracuse, New York. He graduated from West Hill High School in 1981 and entered undergraduate studies at Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Aerospace Engineering in May 1985, and was commissioned the same day.

His first assignment was to Hanscom AFB, Massachusetts, where he worked as a project manager and engineer for a variety of weapon system programs, including the PAVE PAWS radar system and the E-4A Airborne Command Post.

In 1989, he was assigned to Undergraduate Pilot Training at Williams AFB, Arizona. After receiving his pilot wings in April of 1990, he was assigned to Charleston AFB South Carolina, where he flew the C-141B Starlifter. While assigned to Charleston, he flew support missions for numerous campaigns and humanitarian relief missions, including DESERT SHIELD/STORM, PROVIDE PROMISE, UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, PROVIDE COMFORT, and PROVIDE HOPE.

In August 1995, Major Hannon was assigned to McGuire AFB, New Jersey, where he was an Assistant Branch Chief for Headquarters, Twenty-First Air Force. In 1996, he earned a Master of Science degree in Aerospace Science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

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